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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 001640

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UG](#)  
SUBJECT: UGANDA NAMES NEW PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO  
UNITED NATIONS

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhukana Rugunda was named as Uganda's new Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN PermRep) on December 12. Highly accessible to U.S. diplomats, Rugunda had previously served as Uganda's Foreign Minister, is at ease with foreign interlocutors and diplomatic procedures, and was selected primarily to enhance Uganda's credibility at the UN. Rugunda's selection bodes well for our daily interactions with the Ugandan delegation in New York. However, Rugunda is not a forward-leaning strategist, detail-oriented operator, or known for his bureaucratic skills. He insisted on the UN PermRep position being given Cabinet rank and a direct reporting line to President Museveni. While this could be a good sign if Rugunda can act independently of the dysfunctional Foreign Ministry, we do not have any indications that he has been given independent decision-making authority. There is some concern that his direct line to the President could create tensions with Foreign Minister Kutesa. Rugunda and his inexperienced new deputy may also be handicapped by the Ugandan Foreign Ministry's lack of organization and clarity on UN issues. We do not expect a sea change in Uganda's positions at the UN, as we continue to hear the often-repeated explanations that Ugandan needs to vote against the U.S. to maintain credibility in its regional associations. We also do not expect Rugunda and his new team to get off to a quick start on January 1 without a significant level of assistance. End Summary.

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BUTAGIRA OUT...RUGUNDA IN  
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¶2. (C) On December 12, the Uganda Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Minister of Internal Affairs Rukukana Rugunda, an experienced politician and diplomat with significant gravitas, replaced current Permanent Representative to the United Nations Francis Butagira, effective January 1, 2009. The appointment is widely seen as good news and an indication that Museveni took negative reports about Butagira seriously. Museveni reportedly ordered Kutesa to remove Butagira, Kutesa's long-time friend, according to Minister of State for International Relations Henry Okello Oryem. Butagira was appointed to be Uganda's High Commissioner to Germany.

¶3. (C) The bad news is that Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa also removed Uganda's Deputy UN PermRep, Ambassador Adonia Ayebare, a move which has caused concern in New York, Kampala, and the region. His replacement of Ayebare, who is Museveni's point person on the Burundi Peace Process, has raised concern with Burundian and South African officials. Ayebare told us that he will not accept the demotion to Deputy Chief of Mission in Addis Ababa. Instead, he plans to take a leave of absence, which will leave the Burundi process

without an essential player. The President's Principal Private Secretary Amelia Kyambadde advised Ayebare to submit his leave of absence request directly to Museveni, who may not be aware Ayebare was also removed.

¶4. (C) Neither Rugunda nor Ayebare's replacement, Ambassador Patrick Mugoya, who is currently the Director for Regional Affairs at the MFA, are proactive networkers. In addition, the MFA's delays in organizing a new UN unit means that Uganda's new team did not participate in training opportunities provided by UNSC members or the month-long observation of the UNSC. Several MFA officials who worked with Rugunda when he was Foreign Minister say that organizational skills were not Rugunda's strong suit.

¶5. (C) Nonetheless, Rugunda is considered to be one of Museveni's oldest political allies and has served in every Cabinet since 1986. This allowed him to insist that the UN PermRep position be given Cabinet status and report directly to the President, which could put him at odds with Kutesa. Ruling party insiders say that Rugunda's political longevity is explained by the fact that he does not have presidential ambitions. Some critics claim that Rugunda is a "yes man." However, many cabinet members and close observers have told us that he reportedly speaks his mind to Museveni in private. Nonetheless, publicly, Rugunda is very diplomatic. He spoke authoritatively on issues related directly to his ministerial portfolio, but preferred to remain above the political fray.

¶6. (C) U.S. Mission Kampala officers have had excellent access to Rugunda and worked closely with him on LRA and human rights issues. Rugunda chooses his words very

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carefully, particularly in public. When issues are brought to him, he listens very carefully before responding. He will not openly criticize other government colleagues and keeps his cards close to his chest. However, after gaining his confidence, Rugunda will often make references or give hints as to other dynamics at play in any given situation.

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A GOOD SOLDIER  
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¶7. (C) When it announced Rugunda's selection, the MFA stated that an extensive search was conducted and that Rugunda was the unanimous choice because of his good standing at home and abroad. While likely true, Rugunda's appointment could, in part, be the result of domestic political wrangling within the security services, which increased the attractiveness of moving Rugunda out of Uganda during the run up to the 2011 elections. Rugunda is regularly named as the Government's most popular minister, primarily because he is widely viewed at moderate on human rights and a voice of reason within an increasingly militarized internal security apparatus. As Minister of Internal Affairs, Rugunda has had to maintain a delicate balance on the National Security Committee, comprised of military, intelligence, and civilian security entities. He has had a difficult job trying to prevent the Internal Security Organization (an intelligence unit focused on domestic opponents, led by Lt. Gen. David Tiniefuza and based inside the Presidency) from completely undermining efforts to professionalize the Ugandan Police Force through its conduct of operations against civilians while wearing police uniforms. Allegedly, Tiniefuza's primary task is to quash internal dissent in the run-up to the next elections in 2011.

¶8. (C) Ironically, Rugunda was on many occasions called in to provide a "soft" face for heavy-handed government actions directed by Tiniefuza, some of which Rugunda opposed or which he may not have had knowledge prior to their occurrence. After the invasion of the High Court by security forces on March 1, 2007, and the arrests of ministers from the Buganda Kingdom in July 2008, for example, Rugunda was used to help

de-escalate the situation and weaken external criticism of the actions. Prominent journalist and longtime Rugunda friend Andrew Mwenda believes that Rugunda's re-assignment to the UN will give the upper hand to Tinyefuza and other elements within the security forces whose orders are to keep Museveni in power at any cost. As a result, Mwenda and other journalists believe that regime hardliners may have wanted to sideline him in order to allow the police and security apparatus to be used against political opponents in the upcoming campaign. A ruling party rebel parliamentarian from Rugunda's home area, Henry Benyanzaki, said that Rugunda may be "relieved" by his appointment to New York because he will no longer have to intervene or play the front man on issues of human rights abuses at home. On the other hand, some Uganda analysts believe he was put in New York to deflect potential international criticism should political crackdowns emerge during the election run-up.

¶9. (SBU) Rugunda's patience, professionalism, and personal gravitas during the two-year long peace negotiations with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) paid significant political dividends in northern Uganda and within the diplomatic community. He never let LRA demands and insults rattle him. Rugunda, one of the only civilians on the negotiating team, constantly defended the pursuit of negotiations against military and security officials in the government. He could speak authoritatively on the peace talks and regularly briefed the diplomatic community and media on the peace process, which helped distill some doubts about the Government's sincerity in the negotiations.

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (C) Given the lack of institutional expertise on UN issues in Kampala and New York, Rugunda will need (and may appreciate) a significant level of assistance in his first months at the UN. We will continue to work hard from our end to determine what the MFA's instructions are to its mission. We do not have any indications that there will be any great variance in Uganda's positions at the UN.

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BIOGRAPHIC NOTES  
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¶11. (U) Since May 2003, and prior to appointment as UN  
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PermRep, Rugunda has served as Minister of Internal Affairs. Rugunda was appointed as an "ex-officio" member of Parliament (meaning he does not have an elected constituency to represent). Rugunda served as Minister of Water, Lands, and Environment from 2001 to 2003. During his tenure as Environment Minister, he was elected President of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) Governing Council and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Previously, Rugunda served as the Minister in Charge of the Presidency (1999-2001), the Minister of Information (1996-1999), the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1994-1996), the Minister of Transport, Communications, and Works (1987-1994), the Minister of Health (1986-1987), and as the Deputy Minister of Health (1986-1987).

¶12. (U) Rugunda is a founding member of Museveni's original political party, the Uganda Patriotic Movement (1980), and served on the external committee of Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) after the NRM turned to armed struggle. He also was once a member of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) youth wing and of the General Services Unit, a notorious security organization during former President Milton Obote's first government. Rugunda's ties to the UPC has generated significant mistrust among Museveni's hard-line advisors.

¶13. (U) Rugunda graduated with a Master's Degree in Public

Health from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1997. At Berkeley, he served as President of the African Students Union. He received a degree in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Zambia in 1975.

¶14. (U) An ethnic Mukiga from Kabale District, in southwestern Uganda, Rugunda was born in 1947. Rugunda and his wife, Jocelyn, have four sons, three of whom were educated and/or live in the U.S.

BROWNING